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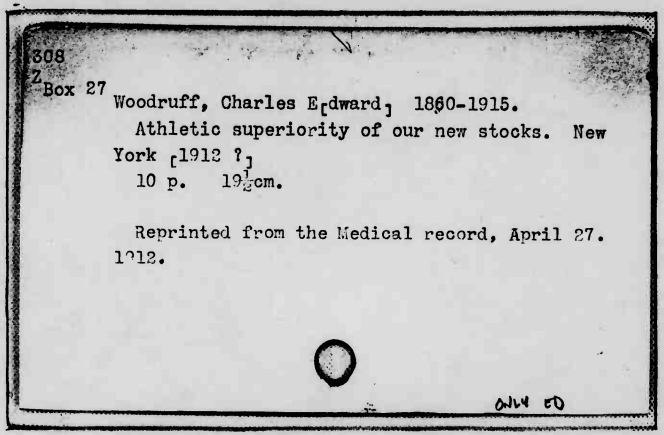

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ATHLETIC SUPERIORITY OF OUR NEW STOCKS.

BY

LT.-COL. CHAS. E. WOODRUFF,

MEDICAL CORPS, U. S. ARMY.

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ATHLETIC SUPERIORITY OF OUR NEW STOCKS.

By LT.-COL. CHAS. E. WOODRUFF,

MEDICAL CORPS, U. S. ARMY.

EVERY little while some timid soul confesses to a fear that Americans are becoming degenerate and are bound to die out. The British also are occasionally apprehensive over their alleged physical decay and fill the newspapers with doleful wails as to the future of the human race in general, and the English part of it in particular. There is no ground for such absurd pessimism, though as a matter of fact, there is a plenty of evidence that certain types in each nation do have a higher death rate than others, and that there is a constant slow change in the general average. Both civilizations have been built up by immigrants, and it is a law of nature that change of racial residence is always followed by extinction or alteration of type through the survival of the fittest for the new environment. Moreover there has been a constant immigration into the British Islands from the beginning of things human, and the influx of new blood has always kept civilization humming even if each invasion in olden times did destroy part of what it found. The same phenonenon is being repeated in America with the sole difference that the invaders, except in Mexico and Peru, have not destroyed, but are constantly

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building up. The process of decay of certain types is also quicker in America and the new blood comes into prominence sooner than in England. Very few of the descendants of the signers of our Declaration of Independence are in public life and most of them are nonentities, while immigrants and the sons of immigrants are in the seats of the mighty. The descendants of the signers of Magna Charta controlled England for many centuries though none of that stock is in evidence now; while the present controlling elements date back some centuries and very few are recent arrivals from the Continent.

It is high time that we find out who are the fittest in each part of America. Every bit of evidence is of some value and that is the reason why the tremendous victories of the American Olympic athletes have such a scientific and popular interest. In the *North American Review* of 1907 there is an analysis of the victories at Athens in 1906, and it is shown that to a large extent the American winners were foreigners or of foreign-born parents, while the old pre-revolutionary stocks were in a conspicuous minority. Moreover, it was discovered that the successes were almost exclusively in short events requiring an enormous expenditure of energy in a short time, while in slow contests of endurance the Americans were hopelessly outclassed by Europeans. The phenomenon was interpreted as another of the many proofs that this sunny southern land is highly stimulating but, as in the case of all other stimulants, exhaustion follows in time though perhaps it may require several generations to be noticeable. Northern races always have died out when they migrated this far south, for it must be remembered that most of Europe is north of the fortieth degree of latitude, and the races which

first stocked this country always lived north of the fiftieth parallel. The successes of the 1908 Olympic athletes present new evidence in support of those general conclusions and it will be highly profitable to look into it a bit, so that we may not overdo the matter of athletics in the physical training of boys.

About 100 of the best athletes in America went to London for the latter competition. The proportion of foreign born, native born of foreign parents, and native born of native parents was about the same as for men of the third decade of life in the general population as shown by the census of 1900, but when we analyze them more closely some astounding facts are discovered. Eighty-three reported their ancestry, and the results are condensed into the following table:

1. Foreign born	8
2. Both parents foreign born	9
3. One parent foreign born	12
4. One or more grandparents foreign born	22
5. One or more great-grandparents foreign born	2
6. One or more great-great-grandparents foreign born	4
7. Old stock	5
8. Colonial stock of 17th century	9
9. Other native born variously stated	12
	83

That is, about three-fourths of the best athletes of the country are of the stocks which arrived here after the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the great majority of them arrived in the two or

three decades following 1840. On account of the "foreign" names among those who did not answer the inquiries these proportions are probably too small.

When we analyze the victors among them, these facts are still further accentuated. Of those who won first, second, or third place, 10 per cent. were foreign born, while 14 per cent. of the non-athletic population of equal age are foreign born. About 43 per cent. were native born of foreign parents as compared with 17 per cent. in the general population, and only 47 were native born of native parents as compared with 68 per cent. as shown in the census. Of the twenty-seven winners whose ancestry is known, three were foreign born, six had foreign born parents, six had one foreign parent, six had one or more foreign grandparents, and one had foreign born great-grandparents. Only one was of old stock, one of colonial stock, and three were native born of native ancestry variously stated. Considering the names it is safe to say that 85 per cent. or more of the winners are of stock which immigrated since 1840. It is not true that the Olympic games were victories for old American families, as so commonly believed.

Now does this mean athletic decay of the old stocks or a temporary greater superiority of the new? Perhaps both conditions exist. The stimulation of southern climes is one of the best attested facts in medicine and anthropology, and the subsequent decay of migrants too far south is also settled. The native children of foreign parents grow bigger than their ancestors, are taller, have larger chests, larger bones and muscles—though much of this is due to better feeding—but they are also quicker, brighter, and more energetic, which is the

result of stimulation. So we find great ability for physical spurts in the first, second, and third native generations, after which there is either reversion to the former normal slowness or actual decay. This stimulation of newcomers differs only in degree from the identical nervous tension of northerners recently arrived in the tropics—a stimulation which completely deceives them as to the dangers of the climate and tempts them to overexertions which are followed by exhaustion or even collapse. The new stocks in America likewise feel better and are more energetic than their cousins who have remained at home under the protection of the mists and fogs of northern Europe. The athletic craze in America could not exist without this stimulation and we find all kinds of clubs and associations patronized by our newcomers, and there is not the slightest doubt, that as in the tropics, they are overdoing the matter.

The birthplaces of the native athletes present more interesting facts. Practically all of them were born north of Mason and Dixon's line, for the six who were of southern birth were so near that line that they could scarcely be considered exceptions—three in Missouri and one each in northern Kentucky, northern Virginia, and Arkansas, and three of the six were winners. The part of the country furnishing no athletes at all has the highest percentage of native born citizens. It has been said that this is due to the fact that no attention is paid to developing athletics in the south, but the absence of athletes is the reason why there is so little time given to these sports. That is, the further south the quicker the physical decay.

The only three foreign born winners were from Ireland, and it is surprising to note that nearly all the contestants were of Irish, Scotch, English, and

German ancestry. Latin Europe was represented by one lone Cuban. The contestants average 5 feet 10 inches in height and 158 pounds in weight, even including the little runners like Hayes. These figures are way above the average of the American population as we would expect in such picked men, but there is another reason, they are descendants of the biggest men in Europe—the Northmen—whom they even surpass in height and weight.

American athletes have long held the records for short, sharp contests, and when these Olympic games were over, it was loudly proclaimed that we had now invaded other fields and were victorious in events requiring endurance; but the Marathon race was the only one, and subsequent events have shown the superiority of Europeans. Even a Marathon cannot be said to be a test of real endurance, for it lasts less than three hours, while the normal man is built for low pressure strains for days. The points which placed our team at the head were short races, jumps, vaulting, throwing weights, and light weight wrestling. It is still true that our excellence consists almost wholly in a curious form of nervousness which permits of the expenditure of all our force at high pressure for a short period, so vastly different from the normal nervous slowness which compels a low pressure expenditure over long periods. Instead of being a matter for congratulation, we can well pause and ask ourselves if it is not a sign of overstimulation which bodes ill for the individual victors. Professional athletes are notoriously short-lived, whereas they should live longer than the rest of us.

College amateurs tell a different story, according to Dr. Anderson of Yale University. The death rate of the athletic alumni ("Y" men) in the last fifty

years, as far as known, was 7.2 per cent., but 12.9 per cent. of the non-athletes died in the same time. As the latter class contained all the short-lived weaklings who could not indulge in strenuous sports, and the former were picked men of perfect physique with longer expectation of living, it is questionable whether these figures do not show some damage to the athletes. The athletic naval cadets break down in after life sooner than the non-athletes, and all cadets are picked men on an equal footing as to longevity. Whether this break down is due to the congenital or acquired neurotic condition which made it possible to expend much energy in a few seconds as in our short contests—an almost constant symptom of even high grades of neurasthenia—or whether it results from the strains and exhaustions of training remains to be determined. The tuberculosis which carries off an undue percentage of both professionals and amateurs, may be due to the original exhaustion or that of training.

The contestants show a remarkable tendency to blondness—the types which originated under the clouds and mists of northern Europe and which are now known to suffer more than brunettes from the nervous instability due to excessive light. They are the only ones we would expect to excel in sudden spurts of energy. Of eighty-two who have mentioned complexions, forty-three have blue eyes, thirteen gray, six light brown, seventeen brown, and only three dark brown. Hair color is always darker than that of the eyes and does not give such clear evidence of blondness, but even here there were twenty-eight with decidedly blond hair, twenty-six with brown, nineteen dark brown, and only nine black. Among the winners brunetteness is still more

rare, for twenty-three had shades of blue and gray eyes, three brown, and only one dark brown, omitting one of part African blood. Twelve had very light hair, thirteen shades of brown, and only two reported hair as dark brown, and none black.

Of the millions of negroes in the United States only two found their way into the team, and one of those, if not both, was part white, and one was a winner in a relay race. Negroes can work long periods at low pressure but are unable to exert their nervous strength all at once like white men, and among whites the brunettes are not so able as the blonds. Similarly only one Indian competed and he achieved nothing except ninth place in the Marathon. The proportion of blonds among the old stock athletes, though less than in the new as we would expect from the diminishing blondness of American families, is apparently considerably larger than in the non-athletic old stock population. That is, pigmentation is protective enough to prevent the stimulation which leads to exertion of this kind. Consequently the brunets, who constitute the majority of our population, furnish a minority of the athletes.

Almost all the points and events not won by the American team were secured by the nations of the northwest corner of Europe, the rest of the world taking so little that it can be considered a victory of the big brawny northmen who have been the world's rulers from time immemorial, and who are largely blond. Of the native born American winners, eight have German ancestry, five English, five Irish, five Scotch, one Welsh, and one Swiss, and the five old stock Americans are probably all English. The races then which are athletic in their ancestral homes are also athletic in America. Methods of training had very little to do with the matter, if anything at all. There is even a still greater significance to these victories of our big blonds, for it is now almost accepted as a fact that this type constituted the primitive Aryans who arose near the Baltic, if not in Scandinavia itself, and who, for 3,000 years, have been migrating all over the world, carrying and building up civilization by reason of native ability and the stimulation of sunny climates, and then dying out from overstimulation. They were like glaciers melting under the sun, but leaving their speech and civilization in a terminal moraine, as evidence that Aryans were once there.

The athletic superiority of the ancient Greeks is curiously like that of our own, for they too were Aryan northeners who had migrated to a stimulating climate. Greece being at about the latitude of forty. They died out because of their climatic unfitness, and the same thing happens in America, but the constant influx of immigration restores the type here, and America seems destined to be the athletic leader for all time—at least in events requiring a spurt of nervous energy; but the slower, more stolid nervous system of northern Europe will always be the winner in low pressure sports requiring endurance over extended periods. The youthful games on the two sides of the Atlantic will always differ like baseball and cricket because of this difference in nervous tension. Low pressure games like golf are the only ones suitable for both nations and survive because men can play them long after they have lost ability for those requiring youthful high tension. It is to be noted, too, that the middle aged European can indulge in the athletics of youth longer than we can, because they age slower and also because of the lower pressure needed as in cricket. So

let us try to introduce low pressure games in which we can indulge until our hair is white, and do away with the system which exiles us to the bleachers thirty years too soon.

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